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STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A,
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR WOOD
OSD FOR SHIVERS
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SUBJECT: ASSEMBLY REGAINS QUORUM; ELECTION LAW NEGLECTED

REF: KABUL 1147

11. (SBU) The National Assembly's lower house regained quorum May 11 after Speaker Qanooni forced an end to the non-Pashtun MPs' boycott over the elections law bill's reservation of 10 parliamentary seats for Kochis (REFTEL). Qanooni redoubled his efforts to end the boycott when public sentiment turned against the lower house because of its failure to consider the politically important civil servants law bill. Several of Qanooni's previous attempts to corral striking MPs had failed when one or both two sides reneged on reconciliation agreements, due to pressure, his staff told us, "from outsiders." Prior to a May 10 reconciliation meeting, Qanooni ordered MPs to surrender their cell phones before locking the members inside a conference room to force a deal. Six hours later, the group agreed to return the elections law bill, along with its controversial Kochi seats reservation, to committee. The group also agreed to discipline Alam Gul Kochi, whose April 12 insults of non-Pashtun MPs had sparked their walkout. Before releasing the MPs, Qanooni had them sign a document attesting to their agreement.

12. (SBU) Since resuming its plenipotentiary sessions, the lower house has focused exclusively on the civil servants law bill, neglecting the elections law. We are continuing to register with the Speaker's office our strong interest in the elections law bill's passage. The lower house recesses June 4 and returns July 21.

WOOD